

# THE MEREDITH EAGLE.

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## THE BLACK ROBE.

By Wilkie Collins.

—AUTHOR OF—

"THE WOMAN IN WHITE," "THE MOON-STONE," "LITTLE FISH," "THE LAW AND THE LADY," "THE NEW MAGDALEN," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER II.—THE JESUIT.

Father Benwell rose and advanced to meet the visitor with his paternal smile. "I am heartily glad to see you," he said, and held out his hand with a becoming mixture of dignity and cordiality. Penrose lifted the offered hand respectfully to his lips. As one of the "Provincials" of the Order, Father Benwell occupied a high place among the English Jesuits. He was accustomed to acts of homage offered by his younger brethren to their spiritual chief.

"I fear you are not well," he proceeded, gently. "Your hand is feverish, Arthur."

"Thank you, Father; I am as well as usual."

"Depression of spirits, perhaps?" Father Benwell persisted.

Penrose admitted it with a pleasing smile.

"My spirits are not very lively," he said.

Father Benwell shook his head in gentle disapproval of a depressed state of spirits in a young man.

"This must be corrected," he remarked. "Cultivate cheerfulness, Arthur. I am myself, thank God, a naturally cheerful man. My mind reflects, in some degree (and reflects gratefully) the brightness and beauty which are part of the great scheme of creation. A similar disposition is to be cultivated. A great trust is about to be placed in you. Be socially agreeable, or you will fail to justify the trust. This is Father Benwell's little sermon. I think it has a merit, Arthur—it is a sermon soon over."

Penrose looked up at his superior, eager to hear more.

He was a very young man. His large, thoughtful, well-opened gray eyes, and his habitual refinement and modesty of manner, gave a certain attraction to his personal appearance, of which it stood in some need. In stature he was stout and lean; his hair had become prematurely thin over his broad forehead; there were hollows already in his cheeks, and marks on either side of his thin delicate lips. He looked like a person who had passed many miserable hours in needless despairing of himself and his prospects. With all this there was something in him so irresistibly truthful and sincere—so suggestive, even where he might be wrong, of a purely conscientious belief in his own errors—that he attracted people to him without an effort, and without being aware of it himself. What would his friends have said if they had been told that the religious enthusiasm of this gentle, self-distrustful, melancholy man might, in its very innocence of suspicion and self-seeking, be perverted to dangerous uses in unscrupulous hands? His friends would, one and all, have received the scandalous assertion with contempt; and Penrose himself, if he had heard of it, might have failed to control his temper for the first time in his life.

"May I ask a question, without giving offense?" he said, timidly.

Father Benwell took his hand. "My dear Arthur, let us open our minds to each other without reserve. What is your question?"

"You have spoken, Father, of a great trust that is about to be placed in me."

"Yes. You are anxious, no doubt, to hear what it is."

"I am anxious to know, in the first place, if it requires me to go back to Oxford."

Father Benwell dropped his young friend's hand. "Do you dislike Oxford?" he asked, observing Penrose, attentively.

"Dear me, Father, if I speak too confidently. I dislike the deception which has obliged me to conceal that I am a Catholic and a priest."

Father Benwell set this little difficulty right, with the air of a man who could make benevolent allowance for unreasonable scruples. "I think, Arthur, you forget two important considerations," he said. "In the first place you have a dispensation from your superiors which absolves you of all responsibility in respect of the concealment that you have practiced. In the second place we could only obtain information of the progress which our church is silently making at the university by employing you in the capacity of—let me say—an independent observer. However, if it will contribute to your ease of mind, I see no objection to informing you that you will not be instructed to return to Oxford. Do I relieve you?"

There could be no question of it. Penrose breathed more freely in every sense of the word.

"At the same time," Father Benwell continued, "let us not misunderstand each other. In the new sphere of action which we design for you, you will not only be at liberty to acknowledge that you are a Catholic, it will be absolutely necessary that you should do so. But you will continue to wear the ordinary dress of an English gentleman, and to preserve the strictest secrecy on the subject of your admission to the priesthood until you are further advised by myself. Now, dear Arthur, read that paper. It is the necessary preface to all that I have yet to say to you."

The "paper" contained a few pages of manuscript relating the early history of Vange Abbey in the days of the monks, and the circumstances under which the property was confiscated to lay uses in the time of Henry the Eighth. Penrose handed back the little narrative, vehemently expressing his sympathy with the monks and his detestation of the king.

"Compose yourself, Arthur," said Father Benwell, smiling pleasantly. "We don't mean to allow Henry the Eighth to have it all his own way for ever."

Penrose looked at his superior in blank bewilderment. His superior withheld any further information for the present.

"Everything in its turn," the discreet Father resumed; "the time of explanation has not yet come. I have something else to show you first. One of the most interesting relics in England. Look here."

He unlocked a flat mahogany box, and displayed to view some writings on vellum, evidently of great age.

"You have had a little sermon already," he said. "You shall have a little story now. No doubt you have heard of Newstead Abbey—famous among the readers of poetry as the residence of Byron? King Henry treated Newstead exactly as he treated Vange Abbey! Many years since the lake at Newstead was dragged, and the brass eagle which had served as the lectern in the old church was rescued from the waters in which it had lain for centuries. A secret receptacle was discovered in the body of the eagle, and the ancient title deeds of the Abbey were found in it. The monks had taken that method of concealing the legal proof of their rights and privileges in the hope—a vain hope, I need scarcely say—that a time might come when justice would restore to them the property of which they had been robbed. Only last summer one of our bishops, administering a northern diocese, spoke of these circumstances to a devout Catholic friend, and said he thought it possible that the precaution taken by the monks at Newstead might also have been taken by the monks at Vange. The friend, I should tell you, was an enthusiast. Saying nothing to the bishop (whose position and responsibilities he was bound to respect), he took into his confidence persons whom he could trust. One moonlight night—in the absence of the present proprietor, or I should rather say, the present usurper, of the estate—the lake at Vange was privately dragged, with a result that proved the bishop's conjecture to be right. Read those valuable documents, Arthur. Knowing your strict sense of honor, and your admirable tenderness of conscience, I wish you to be satisfied of the title of the church to the lands of Vange, by evidence which is beyond dispute."

With this little preface he waited while Penrose read the title deeds.

"Any doubt on your mind?" he asked, when the reading had come to an end.

"Not the shadow of a doubt."

"Is the church's right to the property clear?"

"As clear, father, as words can make it."

"Very good. We will look up the documents. Arbitrary confiscation, Arthur, even on the part of a king, cannot override the law. What the church once lawfully possessed, the church has a right to recover. Any doubt about that in your mind?"

"Only the doubt of how the church can recover. Is there anything in this particular case to be hoped from the law?"

"Nothing whatever."

"And yet, father, you speak as if you saw some prospect of the restitution of the property. By what means can the restitution be made?"

"By peaceful and worthy means," Father Benwell answered. "By honorable restoration of the confiscated property to the church on the part of the person who is now in possession of it."

Penrose was surprised and interested.

"Is the person a Catholic?" he asked, eagerly.

"Not yet," Father Benwell laid a strong emphasis on those two little words. His fat fingers drummed restlessly on the table; his vigilant eyes rested expectantly on Penrose.

"Surely you understand me, Arthur?" he added, after an interval.

The color rose slowly in the worn face of Penrose.

"I am afraid to understand you," he said.

"Why?"

"I am not sure that it is my better sense which understands. I am afraid, Father, it may be my vanity and presumption."

Father Benwell leaned back luxuriously in his chair.

"I like that modesty," he said, with a relishing smack of his lips, as if modesty was as good as a meal to him.

"There is power of the right sort, Arthur, hidden under the diffidence that does you honor. I am more than ever satisfied that I have been right in reporting you as worthy of this most serious trust. I believe the conversion of the owner of Vange Abbey is—in your hands—no more than a matter of time."

"May I ask what his name is?"

"Certainly. His name is Lewis Romaine."

"When do you introduce me to him?"

"Impossible to say. I have not yet been introduced myself."

"You don't know Mr. Romaine?"

"I have never even seen him."

These discouraging replies were made with the perfect composure of a man who saw his way clearly before him. Sinking from one depth of perplexity to another, Penrose ventured on putting a last question.

"How am I to approach Mr. Romaine?" he asked.

"I can only answer that, Arthur, by admitting you still further into my confidence. It is disagreeable to me," said the reverend gentleman, with the most becoming humility, "to speak of myself. But it must be done. Shall we have a little coffee to help us through the coming extract from Father Benwell's autobiography? Don't look so serious, my son! When the occasion permits it, let us take life lightly."

He rang the bell and ordered the coffee, as if he was the master of the house. The servant treated him with the most scrupulous respect. He hummed a little tune, and talked at intervals of the weather, while they were waiting.

"Plenty of sugar, Arthur," he inquired, when the coffee was brought in. "No? Even in trifles I should have been glad to feel that there was perfect sympathy between us. I like plenty of sugar myself."

Having sweetened his coffee, with the closest attention to the process, he was at liberty to enlighten his young friend. He did it so easily and so cheerfully, that a far less patient man than Penrose would have listened to him with interest.

CHAPTER III.—THE INTRODUCTION TO ROMANES.

"Excepting my employment here in the library," Father Benwell began, "and some interesting conversation with Lord Loring, to which I shall presently allude, I am almost as great a stranger in this house, Arthur, as your self. When the object which we now have in view was first taken seriously into consideration, I had the honor of being personally acquainted with Lord Loring. I was also aware that he was an intimate and trusted friend of Romaine. Under these circumstances, his lordship presented himself to our point of view as a means of approaching the owner of Vange Abbey without exciting distrust. I was charged accordingly with the duty of establishing myself on terms of intimacy in this house, by way of making room for me, the spiritual director of Lord and Lady Loring was attached, in some inferior capacity, to a mission abroad. And here I am in this place! By the way, don't treat me (when we are in the presence of visitors) with any special marks of respect. I am not provincial of our order in Lord Loring's house—I am one of the inferior clergy."

Penrose looked at him with admiration. "It is a great sacrifice to make, Father, in your position, and at your age."

"Not at all, Arthur. A position of authority involves certain temptations to pride. I feel this change as a lesson in humility which is good for me. For example, Lady Loring (as I can plainly see) dislikes and distrusts me. Then, again, a young lady has recently arrived here on a visit. She is a Protestant, and avoids me so carefully, poor soul, that I have never seen her yet. These rebuffs are wholesome reminders of the fallible human nature to a man who has occupied a place of high trust and command. Besides, there have been obstructions in my way which have had an excellent effect in rousing my energies. How do you feel, Arthur, when you encounter obstacles?"

"I do my best to remove them, Father. But I am sometimes conscious of a sense of discouragement."

"Curious," said Father Benwell, "I am only conscious, myself, of a sense of impatience. What right has an obstacle to get in my way?—that is how I look at it. For example, the first thing I heard, when I came here, was that Romaine had left England. My introduction to him was indefinitely delayed; I had to look to Lord Loring for all the information I wanted, relating to the man and his habits. There was another obstacle! Not living in the house,

I was obliged to find an excuse for being constantly on the spot, ready to take advantage of his lordship's leisure moments for conversation. I sat down in this room, and I said to myself, 'Before I get up again, I mean to brush these impertinent obstacles out of my way!' The state of the books suggested the idea of which I was in search. Before I left the house I was charged with the re-arrangement of the library. From that moment I came and went as often as I liked. Whenever Lord Loring was disposed for a little talk, there I was, to lead the talk in the right direction. And what is the result? On the first occasion when Romaine presents himself I can place myself in a position to become his daily companion. All due, Arthur, in the first instance, to my impatience of obstacles. Amusing, isn't it?"

Penrose was perhaps deficient in the sense of humor. Instead of being amused he appeared to be anxious for more information. "In what capacity am I to be Mr. Romaine's companion?" he asked.

"Don't let me disturb you," he said, looking at Penrose. "Is this the gentleman who is to assist Mr. Romaine?"

Father Benwell presented his young friend. "Arthur Penrose, my lord. I ventured to suggest that he should call here to-day, in case you wished to put any questions to him."

"Quite needless, after your recommendation," Lord Loring answered, graciously. "Mr. Penrose could not have come here at a more appropriate time. As it happens, Mr. Romaine has paid us a visit to-day—he is now in the picture-gallery."

The priests looked at each other. Lord Loring left them as he spoke. He walked to the opposite door of the library, opened it, glanced round the hall and at the stairs, and returned again, with the passing expression of annoyance visible once more. "Come with me to the gallery, gentlemen," he said; "I shall be happy to introduce you to Mr. Romaine."

Penrose accepted the proposal. Father Benwell pointed with a smile to the books scattered about him.

"With permission, I will follow your lordship," he said.

"Who was my lord looking for?" That was the question in Father Benwell's mind, while he put some of the books away on the shelves, and collected the scattered papers on the table, relating to his correspondence with Rome. It had become a habit of his life to be suspicious of any circumstances occurring within his range of observation for which he was unable to account. He might have felt some stronger emotion on this occasion if he had known that the conspiracy in the library to convert Romaine was matched by the conspiracy in the picture-gallery to marry him.

Lady Loring's narrative of the conversation which had taken place between Stella and herself had encouraged her husband to try his proposed experiment without delay. "I shall send a letter at once to Romaine's hotel," he said.

"Inviting him to come here to-day?" he had said.

"Yes. I shall say I particularly wish to consult him about a picture. Are we to prepare Stella to see him, or would it be better to let the meeting take her by surprise?"

"Certainly not!" said Lady Loring. "With her sensitive disposition I am afraid of taking Stella by surprise. Let me only tell her that Romaine is the original of her portrait, and that he is likely to call on you to see the picture to-day—and leave the rest to me."

Lady Loring's suggestion was immediately carried out. In the first fervor of her agitation Stella had declared that her courage was not equal to a meeting with Romaine on that day. Becoming more composed she yielded to Lady Loring's persuasion so far as to promise that she would at least make the attempt to follow her friend to the gallery. "If I go down with you," she said, "it will look as if we had arranged the thing between us. I can't bear even to think of that! Let me look in by myself, as if it was by accident."

Consenting to this arrangement Lady Loring had proceeded alone to the gallery, when Romaine's visit was announced. The minutes passed and Stella did not appear. Lord Loring thought it possible that she might shrink from openly presenting herself at the main entrance to the gallery, and might prefer—especially if she was not aware of the priest's presence in the room—to slip in quietly by the library door. Failing to find her, on putting this idea to the test, he had discovered Penrose, and had so hastened the introduction of the younger of the two Jesuits to Romaine.

Having gathered his papers together Father Benwell crossed the library to the deep bay-window which lighted the room, and opened his dispatch-box, standing on a small table in the recess. Placed in this position he was invisible to any person entering the room by the hall door.

He had secured his papers in the dispatch-box, and had just closed and locked it, when he heard the door cautiously opened.

The instant afterward the rustling of a woman's dress over the carpet caught his ear. Other men might have walked

a thirsty man. At the same time, let me suggest that you are innocently raising difficulties where no difficulties exist. I have already mentioned as one of the necessities of the case that you and Romaine should be friends. How can that be unless there is precisely that sympathy between you which you have so well described? I am a sanguine man, and I believe you will like each other. Wait till you see him."

As the words passed his lips the door that led to the picture-gallery was opened. Lord Loring entered the library.

He looked quickly round him—apparently in search of some person who might, perhaps, be found in the room. A transient shade of annoyance showed itself in his face, and disappeared again, as he bowed.

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The instant afterward the rustling of a woman's dress over the carpet caught his ear. Other men might have walked

out of the recess and shown themselves. Father Benwell staid where he was, and waited until the lady crossed his range of view.

The priest observed with cold attention her darkly-beautiful eyes and hair, her quickly-changing color, her modest grace of movement. Slowly, and in evident agitation, she advanced to the door of the picture-gallery—and paused, as if she was afraid to open it. Father Benwell heard her sigh to herself, softly: "Oh, how shall I meet him?" She turned aside to the looking-glass over the fireplace. The reflection of her charming face seemed to rouse her courage. She retraced her steps and timidly opened the door. Lord Loring must have been close by at the moment. His voice immediately made itself heard in the library.

"Come in, Stella—come in! Here is a new picture for you to see; and a friend whom I want to present to you, who must be your friend, too—Mr. Lewis Romaine."

The door was closed again. Father Benwell stood still as a statue in the recess, with his head down, deep in thought. After a while he roused himself, and rapidly returned to the writing-table. With a roughness, strange unlike his customary deliberation or movement, he snatched a sheet of paper out of the case, and, frowning heavily, wrote these lines on it:

"Since my letter was sealed I have made a discovery which must be communicated without the loss of a post. I greatly fear there may be a woman in our way. Trust me to combat this obstacle as I have combated other obstacles. In the meantime the work goes on. Penrose has received his first instructions, and has to-day been presented to Romaine."

He addressed this letter to Rome, as he had addressed the letter preceding it. "Now for the woman!" he said to himself—and opened the door of the picture gallery.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

RICH HILL.

While a whaler during the last fishing season was lying in a small bay at the mouth of one of the rivers which empty into the ocean on the coast of Alaska, a great many of the natives came on board to trade for sea biscuit, of which they were very fond, and finally induced the captain to go up the river and fish for salmon, with which the river was said to be alive. A boat was fitted out, manned by four men and the captain, and they went up the river fifteen miles, where they went ashore at the base of a hill about 500 feet high, up which the captain and chief of the natives climbed, while the crew and natives fished. The summit of the hill was nothing but an extinct crater, in which the captain noticed that the rocks resembled iron that it had been melted. He undertook to knock off a piece, but could not do so, as it seemed to bend, not break, under repeated blows with the head of a boat ax. He then struck it with the blade of the ax, and chopped it off and took it in his hand. The surface where the ax had cleaved its way through the rock he saw as soft nearly as lead, although it did not shine. He thought then that it was a metal of some kind, and kept it. Specimens of similar character were picked up by others of the crew and taken to Frisco. The piece which the captain chopped off the top of the hill with the ax, has assayed \$8000 per ton in silver, and the loose rocks picked up went as high as \$75 silver per ton. A company of Oaklanders, California, to whom the rock was submitted, have chartered the whaler and the crew to make a trip in the spring to the scene of this remarkable discovery, and a working party will be left at the location to dig out a cargo.

AMERICA'S SUPERIORITY.

One great cause for the decrease in English exports is the conversation among English manufacturers and their extreme dislike of innovations. They are inclined to stick to old processes and old styles, refusing to study the tastes of their customers. They seek to impose their own notions and ideas upon the world. Hence, foreign buyers seek in America, in Germany, and in France, goods better suited to their tastes and needs. French manufacturers are particularly ready and quick to suit their work to the tastes of their customers. They are especially apt in devising new styles and patterns, such as shall most readily meet the varying tastes of buyers. They realize that a variety is pleasing when the old one fails to suit; while the Englishman looks well at the cost, and prefers to continue "in the good old way" with the hope that some day the fashion may come round again. Another example of the conservatism of the English manufacturer is manifested in his preference for hand work over machine work. He refuses to believe that a machine can be made to do more perfect work than the hand. Hence, in the manufacture of watches, of sewing-machines, and of many classes of fire-arms, he utterly fails to compete with more progressive mechanics on this side of the Atlantic. The more observing and thoughtful of Englishmen themselves are beginning to realize these facts, and have already raised the note of alarm.

RELIGIOUS.

The Rev. George Mueller, founder of the famous orphanages in Bristol, which are sustained by the prayers of the founder that money may be sent voluntarily to his support, spoke for over half an hour in the Baptist ministers' meeting. He advised the preachers not to neglect their own souls' welfare because their time is so much taken up with parishioners, told them plainly that they must look out for answers to prayer if they wanted their prayers answered, and besought them to cultivate a lowly mind. Ministers, he said, are tempted to walk carelessly and loosely, and in conformity with the world.—N. Y. Sun.

Cardinals with flowing beards were not singular a few centuries ago. Cardinal Pole wore a beard, and one of their eminences, a Capuchin, wore a beard not more than twenty years ago. Cardinal Hassoun, whose elevation to the purple has just been formally announced, is, however, the only present member of the sacred college who carries his hirsute appendages under the red hat, for he wears a patriarchal beard flowing and snowy white. Though the youngest member of the cardinalate, he is almost the oldest in years, having been born eighty years ago.

The unfinished St. Peter's cathedral at Montreal, which has been building 10 years, costing hundreds of thousands of dollars and the lives of some workmen, and which promised to be the largest church on this continent, is to be pulled down, its completion being too great a task for the Catholic church authorities. A church of moderate dimensions will take its place.

In the course of his experiences as a medical missionary among the Mongols the Rev. James Gilmour has gathered some interesting information regarding their inner life, but perhaps the most curious item is that Mongol doctors are not entirely unacquainted with the properties of galvanism. It is said that they are in the habit of prescribing the loadstone ore, reduced to powder, as efficacious when applied to sores, but Mr. Gilmour was astonished to learn that a man hard of hearing had been recommended to put a piece of loadstone into each ear and chew a piece of iron in his mouth.

The Vatican has sent peremptory commands to certain of the Irish episcopacy to abstain from language tending to cause the belief that the Pope approves of the operations of the land league.

Two Chinamen were baptized and received into the church at Stockton, Cal. They were the first of that nation to join any church in that city.

Pagans and Agnostics considerably outnumber the believers in any form of Divine revelation. While the heathen and those of no known creed are computed at 796,339,355, there are 300,000,000 Roman Catholics, 113,750,000 Protestants, 88,000,000 adherents of other forms of Christianity, 100,000,000 Mahomedans, and 6,000,000 Jews.

How to encourage your pastor: First, call a man that you can believe in and trust. Then pay him what you can honestly afford, and what will be a living for him. Then treat him as if he were a man, and entitled to the respect and consideration of his flock. Invite him to your house now and then. Call and see him, and lift him up by social intercourse and fraternal sympathy. If you have choice friends come to see you, invite him sometimes to come and see them. Treat him warmly, cordially. See how much better man it will make of him. How much better preacher. How much more earnest worker. Don't be afraid to tell him now and then that he has taught you something; that he has preached an interesting and instructive sermon. He will preach better next time, and more eloquently. See if he does not. Don't find fault with him every time you meet him. It doesn't build him up or give him confidence. And, above all things, don't think because you can run a mill, a foundry, a shop or store, or an office, better than he can, that you can run a church or a parish better. That doesn't encourage him. It makes him feel as if he had mistaken his calling, or neglected his preparation for it. Or, being a man of "like passions with you," it may make him mad. Just as angry as it would you, if he should come into your mill or manufactory, and tell you how to transact your business. You would properly and instantly tell him to "mind his own business," and perhaps preach to him a little sermon from St. Paul's text about being "busy-bodies in other men's matters." And don't be always pulling back on him, but help him in vestries, and Sunday-schools, and other work. If he makes a suggestion, consider it. Don't treat him as if he were a wolf invading the fold, but a shepherd taking care of it. This will give him confidence and hope, two necessary things to success. Be charitable to him, and if anybody talks against him, or criticizes him, defend him. If he breaks rubrics, or is immoral in any way, don't talk about it. Let the bishop know, the only man that has any right to reprove him or discipline him. Any other man doing it is open to the charge of impertinence. He is not your "hired man." "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant?" So don't treat him as if he were a hireling.—Galveston News.

The ugliness of the husband is an addition to the beauty of the love.











AMERICA'S TEA FARM.

[illegible]